

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3256

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO SRI LANKA

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECTION MRN 0978 VICE 1978)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : PFOR, PORG, BA

SUBJECT : ATTENDANCE AT COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED MEETING: BAHRAIN

REF : STATE 171414

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN IS UNENTHUSIASTICALLY PREPARING ITSELF TO FIELD A MAJOR DELEGATION TO THE NAC MEETINGS IN COLOMBO IN MID-AUGUST. ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA), A FIVE-MANIBAHRAINI DELEGATION, LED BY MAHMOOD BAHLOOL, DIRECTOR, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEPT. OF MFA, WILL ATTEND THE AUGUST 9 - 11 MEETING. THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF BAHRAIN, SHAIKH MOHAMMAD BIN MUBARAK AL KHALIFA, WILL ARRIVE IN COLOMBO ON AUGUST 11 OR 12 TO JOIN THE NAM FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING. THE AMIR OF BAHRAIN, HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH ISA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFA, WILL ARRIVE IN COLOMBO ON AUGUST 15 OR 16 TO ATTEND THE SUMMIT MEETING.

2. ACCORDING TO MFA, THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA HAS NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THE AMIR'S PLANS TO ATTEND THE SUMMIT AS HE IS WAITING TO SEE IF HIS AMIRI COLLEAGUES IN THE GULF REGION ARE ATTENDING.
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IF THEY DON'T, HE WON'T EITHER.

3. TUCKED AS IT IS DEEP WITHIN THE ARAB BLOC FOLD, BAHRAIN WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN ITS PRAGMATIC POSITION (ABSTENTION) ON MOST ISSUES EXCEPT THOSE DIRECTLY EFFECTING THE ARAB WORLD. MAHMOOD BAHLOOL IS A SOFT-SPOKEN, WE THINK NON-IDEOLOGICAL, OFFICIAL WHO IS INFORMAL AND WITH WHOM IT IS EASY TO COMMUNICATE. EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT COLOMBO OR DELHI OFFICERS MIGHT FIND HIM RESPONSIVE AND FORTHCOMING TO THE EXTENT HE IS INFORMED. IN NO SENSE IS BAHRAIN A MAKER/BREAKER OF ARAB POSITIONS, BUT WE HAVE FOUND IN THE PAST THAT BAHRAIN IS OFTEN WELL-INFORMED AND DISPOSED TO LETTING US KNOW ABOUT EMERGING POSITIONS.

4. AS FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HE IS A QUICK-WITTED, INTELLIGENT MAN WHO HAS RECENTLY BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE ARAB LEAGUE'S ATTEMPTS AT MEDIATION IN LEBANON. WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT HE WILL PROBABLY BE TOO BUSY IN INTRA-ARAB COUNCILS TO FIND THE TIME TO TALK WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS.

5. THE AMIR TOLD AMBASSADOR JULY 17 FOR THE SECOND TIME THAT HE HOPES THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE "IS CANCELLED" SINCE HE PERSONALLY CONSIDERS IT A WASTE OF TIME AND HIS IDEA OF SUMMER FUN IS ORIENTED A LITTLE MORE TOWARD WEST END THAN COLOMBO.

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